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By

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MARION SPRING CLARK

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

MISS ELIZABETH LANGLEY, Mistress of Johnson Hall.

MAGNOLIA SIMPSON, her protégé.

HETTY PERKINS, maid.

MISS MATILDA JERUSHIA GREEN, supposed boarding school inspector.

PUPILS.

BERNICE JULIEN, leader in the school.

ETHEL FENLEIGH, the snob.

CLEMENTINA CLARISSA CHESTER, alias TOODLES, who uses slang.

FLORENCE NORTON, who brags.

ESTHER LEWISTON, who airs her grandmother's views.

CLARICE LONG.

JOYCE MILLER.

KITTY EMERSON, baby of the school.

BETTY MAITLAND, OLIVE ARLINGTON, friends of the girls.

(Costumes, modern.)

SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—School sitting room. An afternoon and evening of the same day.

ACT II.—Same. The next morning.

ACT III.—Bernice's room. Evening of next day.

ACT IV.—School sitting room. A month later, Commencement Day.

The Charity Pupil

ACT I.

SCENE.—Sitting room at Johnson Hall. Curtain rises showing girls around piano, singing. (Any school or popular song.)

Toodles (after song). I say, girls, that's a cracking good song.

(Enter *Bernice* hurriedly.)

Bernice. Oh, girls, what do you think?

Toodles. Nothing. I never do!

Esther. Well, what's up?

All. Do tell us!

Bernice. Oh, you will have to guess first.

Kitty. Miss Langley is going to let us have ice cream for supper? Um-um!

Bernice. Oh, you're freezing!

Clarice. We are all going driving Saturday?

Florence. I'm sure I don't know.

Ethel. It's a wonder you admit it.

Bernice. Well, I guess I shall have to tell you. Miss Langley has consented to take in a poor pupil, a regular country greenhorn.

Toodles. Well, I'll be jiggered!

Ethel. Of all things!

Clarice. She probably will have wisps of hay in her hair, likely as not try to blow out the gas, and—

Esther. Eat with her knife, of course.

Kitty. What do you suppose she will look like, girls?

Ethel (sarcastically). Oh, a raving, tearing beauty, of course.

Florence. I suppose that she will talk with a regular Down East twang and through her nose at that (imitating it).

Esther. My grandmother says Down East people are respectable, to say the least.

Bernice. I heard her mother is a special friend of Miss Langley's, so, of course, she will get all the petting.

Ethel. I know that she will be ill-bred and extremely repulsive to my finer sensibilities.

Esther. And mine!

Clarice. Same here!

Toodles (aside). Now wouldn't that jar you!

Esther. Well, girls, my grandmother says don't cross your bridges before you come to them.

Ethel. No, and after all, we don't have to have anything to do with her.

(Enter Hetty.)

Hetty. Well, young ladies, I've got some news for you. Miss Langley had a caller this afternoon, and I just bethought meself that the brass fixin's on the door needed cleanin', and so—

Toodles. Then, Hetty, you were doing some rubbering as well as rubbing. (Girls laugh.)

Hetty (ignoring her). And from what I heard I take it she's a havin' another girl come to the Hall.

Joyce. Oh, tell us some news, Hetty!

Hetty. You've heard, have you? Well, as I was a goin' to say, she don't have to pay for tuition and board, neither.

Kitty. Really? (Girls stare in surprise.)

Ethel. A charity pupil!

Hetty. And I was thinkin' as how I could work her in for makin' beds, and dustin', and washin' dishes, and mebbe for cleanin' up after your spreads, and—

Toodles. Oh, you talk too much, Hetty.

Hetty (starts). Land sakes, here comes Miss Langley. (*Hetty exits.*)

Toodles. Beat it, Hetty.

(Girls scramble wildly for books and fall into attitudes of study.)

(Enter Miss Langley.)

Miss Langley. My dear girls, I had not expected to find you studying. Why, Bernice, my dear, what book is that in which you are so deeply interested? The dictionary? What is there you wish to find in such a hurry?

Bernice. Oh, er—l—I only wanted to find the definition of prestidigitator.

Miss Langley. Very good, my dear, very good, indeed.

Bernice (aside). Whew, that was a narrow escape!

Miss Langley. Now put up your books, young ladies, for there is something about which I would like to speak to you. As you know and knew, when you came here, Johnson Hall is not

an establishment of any great financial backing, and—(bell rings).

Hetty (outside). You're wanted, Miss Langley, ma'am.

(Exit Miss Langley.)

Kitty. I wonder who it is. (Girls listen intently.)

Bernice. Hark! Miss Langley is speaking, I think. (She goes to door and opens it a crack to hear.)

Miss Langley (outside). Magnolia, my dear child—. (Girls snicker.)

Florence. What a name!

Miss Langley (outside). I did not expect you until to-morrow. Why you are the very image of your mother. You must let me introduce you to the girls. (Bernice shuts the door hastily and runs back to her seat.)

(Enter Miss Langley, with Magnolia following shyly.)

Miss Langley. Young ladies, I have the pleasure of presenting to you my young friend and protégé, Miss Magnolia Simpson (drawing Magnolia forward) of Fairville, Maine. (She holds out her hand, but girls pretend not to see it, except Bernice, who shakes it gingerly.) I hope you girls will be very good friends. (Girls exchange glances.) Now, girls, go to your rooms and get ready for the evening meal. At tea time you will have a chance to become better acquainted. (Turning to Magnolia.) Come, my dear, I will take you to your room.

(Exit Miss Langley and Magnolia.)

Ethel. Just as I expected—from Wayback!

Joyce. And what a name, too! (Pause.)

Clarice. Well, girls, we *can* call her Mag!

Toodles. No high-falutin' names for me.

Ethel. Oh, no, none for you, Miss Clementina Clarissa Chester!

Toodles (making a face). Young ladies, I have the *pressure* of presenting to you Miss *Mongolia Samson*. (Girls laugh.)

Florence. Well, I am sure that my mother would seriously object to my having anything to do with such a commonplace individual. (Tea-bell rings. Girls rise.)

Kitty. Oh, hurry girls, or we'll be late.

Bernice. Remember, be on your best behavior to-night, for we have with us "my young friend and protégé, Miss Magnolia Simpson." (Exit girls.)

(Enter Hetty.)

Hetty. This way, ma'am, this way. (Ushers in Miss Matilda Green.) Miss Langley is having tea now, ma'am, but I will tell her as how you be here.

Miss Green. Here is my card. (Hetty takes it and exits.)

Miss Green (settling herself). Now to follow out Mr. Simpson's directions and play the role of an amateur detective. (Opens bag and takes out letter and spectacles.) These are what you might call my marching orders from Mr. Simpson. (Reads.)

"THE WELLS, MEXICO, May —, 19—.

"Miss Matilda Green.

"Dear Friend—Please ascertain, to the best of your ability, how worthy Johnson Hall is of my endowment."

So that's his plan, is it? (reads).

"Also find out if those so-called 'ladies' act as such, and how they treat a little country girl, like my daughter, Magnolia. It was extremely kind of Miss Langley to remember the friend of her childhood days, and, in my absence, care for her daughter, since her mother's death. I would be only too glad to endow the school. The oil wells down here in Mexico are proving of more value than I dared hope. I do not wish you to let Magnolia know of my whereabouts for a short time, and I also wish to keep the fact that I am growing rich a secret.

"Hoping to hear from you in due time, I remain,

"Yours respectfully,

"JAMES T. SIMPSON."

Miss Green (folding letter). I will endeavor to do all I can for him. (Takes out large handkerchief from bag and blows nose vigorously.) I will take advantage of the opportunity and look around. (Gets up and inspects room.) It is kind of untidy, though. Still, girls will be girls. (Picks up Shakespeare from bookcase.) Ah! Shakespeare! (Finds pickled lime near where book has been, and picks it up gingerly.) What is this—a lemon? They evidently find the subject rather dry. (Drops lime into bag.) I don't want to get them into trouble. (Pause.) Here comes the madam, I guess. (Primps before glass.)

(Enter Miss Langley.)

Miss Langley. This is Miss Green, is it not?
I am Miss Langley.

Miss Green. Yes, I'm Miss Green—Matilda Jerusha Green, named for both my grandmothers. I am a boarding school inspector. You may have heard of me.

Miss Langley. No, I can not say that I have.

Miss Green (aside). Nor any one else!

Miss Langley. Can I help you in any way?

Miss Green. Yes, indeed. Of course, I always remain a while at each school and join the pupils in all they do. I do not wish to have you inform the girls of my errand while I am here.

Miss Langley. Very well, I understand your errand and acquiesce to what you have said. Perhaps you are tired and would like to retire immediately to your room.

Miss Green. I would, if I may.

(*Miss Langley* rings for Hetty.)

(*Enter Hetty.*)

Hetty. Ma'am?

Miss Langley. Please show Miss Green to her room.

Hetty. Yes'm! (She takes Miss Green's bag.)

Miss Green. Thank you, Miss Langley. Good night.

Miss Langley. Good night, Miss Green.

(Exit Hetty, with Miss Green following.)

(Exit Miss Langley.)

(Enter Magnolia.)

Magnolia (looking around). I think I shall like this place very much. The grounds of Johnson Hall are beautiful. Mother told me once that in the garden there is a quaint old sun-dial, which bears the inscription, "I only mark the sunny hours." (Pauses and looks around.) When I found that Johnson Hall was to be my home for a while, I was very happy, for I knew there were girls here of my own age. As mother was sick so much, and I had the care of her and the house, too, I had no chance to make any intimate friends. My books were my only companions. (Picks book up from table.) Oh, here is my old friend, "The Idylls of the King." (Settles herself to read.)

(Bernice, Toodles, Florence, Ethel, Kitty, aside at entrance.)

Kitty (nudging Bernice). You go first.

(Enter girls.)

Bernice (diffidently). How do you like the school? Do you think you will be homesick?

Magnolia. Oh, I think I shall enjoy it very much. It seems a little strange at first, you know.

Ethel (condescendingly). What sort of a home have you, Mag?

Magnolia. Oh, just a simple country home, but life was never monotonous and we had many good times.

Florence. What do you call good times, Mag?

Magnolia. In the winter we have sleighing parties and quilting bees, and in the summer and

autumn we have hay parties and husking bees. At the quilting parties we have contests to see who can quilt the fastest.

Florence. Oh, I am sure I could quilt the fastest and best of any one.

Ethel. Did you ever try it?

Florence. No, but I am sure I could.

Bernice. Oh, of course.

Magnolia. Does Miss Langley have any special rules here?

Kitty. I think she is very strict.

Toodles. Ahem! Well, I guess she is not! Not by a jugful!

Bernice. Oh, Magnolia, don't look so alarmed. Miss Langley isn't what Kitty says she is at all, but she is firm on certain things.

Magnolia. What things?

Toodles. Oh—er—we have to take a glass of molasses and water before each meal, and a soda mint after. Drink lots of Hood's buttermilk to insure long life, and climb three flights of stairs twice a day to make us highminded.

Ethel. Toodles, don't be ridiculous!

Bernice (explaining). Oh, the rules are really very simple. Promptness at meals and recitations, neatness of dress and proper chaperonage when leaving the school—these are the principal rules.

Magnolia. Well, I am sure those are very simple. (Rises.) You must excuse me now, for my unpacking is yet to be done. (Starts to

leave room.) Oh, I forgot to ask you what time the lights must be out.

Kitty. At ten o'clock.

Magnolia. Ten o'clock! Why, I always go to bed at eight. At my home all respectable people are in bed by that time.

Ethel. Then I suppose you do not consider us respectable people.

Magnolia. I didn't mean that exactly, but—er—well, good night and thank you very much. (Exit Magnolia.)

Toodles. Humph! Goes to bed with the chickens.

(Enter Clarice, Joyce and Esther.)

Joyce. Oh, here you are! We have been looking everywhere for you.

Bernice. You should have been here. We have been having an interview with Miss Mag.

Kitty. Yes, and she has just left us to go to bed. Bed! just think!

Esther. My grandmother says it is none too early.

Bernice (rising). Well, where is—(looking for handkerchief). I guess I must have left it in the dining room.

(Exit Bernice.)

Clarice. I met Betty and Olive this morning, and they said they would try and come over the next half holiday.

Esther. We must try and get up some celebration for them.

Joyce. It will take Bernice to plan for that.

(Enter Bernice.)

Bernice (excitedly). Oh, girls, I have just heard the *awfullest* thing!

All. What's the matter?

Bernice. As I passed Miss Langley's office I caught a glimpse of her looking very glum and in her hand were some papers which looked very much like deeds. (She pauses for breath.)

Toodles. Don't leave us in suspense!

Bernice. I heard a man's voice, too.

Toodles. The plot thickens! Enter the villain!

Bernice. He was saying something about foreclosing a mortgage. What do you suppose he meant? (Pause.) Could that have been what Miss Langley was going to tell us this afternoon?

Clarice. Surely there can't be a mortgage on the school!

Esther. My grandmother says that mortgages are awful things.

Ethel. So she has had experience?

Bernice (doubtfully). Well, you know the finances have been at a rather low ebb for a long time.

Toodles. It is about time for the fairy god-mother to appear.

Joyce. Those things are always in stories.

Clarice. Wouldn't it be awful if Miss Langley did have to close Johnson Hall!

Ethel. What a disgrace it would be to have my name connected with a school too poor to pay its debts.

Toodles. It's too bad about you!

Bernice. There are more serious things to consider than the disgrace to your name, Ethel.
(Pause.)

Joyce. Isn't there anything we can do?

Kitty. I am afraid not.

Esther. Miss Langley may wish to tell us about it herself, so we would better not say anything about it just now!

(Bell rings. Girls rise.)

Florence. Betty and Olive are coming over Thursday, and we want you, Bernice, to help us plan for a celebration.

Bernice. I know what we can do. A spread!

All. The very thing!

Bernice. We can talk about it upstairs in my room, for the bell has rung and we must not stop. (Exit girls.)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

SCENE.—Same as Act I. Next morning.

(Enter Hetty and Magnolia.)

Hetty. Now this room has to be dusted every morning. I keep the dusters and dust-cap in that bag (pointing). Miss Langley is petikler about the dustin', so be sure an' do it well, an' don't be afraid to reach up (pointing). Well, I'll leave it to you, for I must go along about my

work. (She peeks back through door and smiles knowingly. Magnolia goes toward dust-bag.)

Hetty. My, but I worked that easy!

(Exit Hetty.)

Magnolia (pulling out dust-cap). What a cute little cap! (holding it up.) At home I always used a cloth tied around my head (putting it on before glass). Why, isn't that pretty! I look like Evangeline in it, or—or Priscilla, the Puritan maiden. (Pulls dust cloth out and shakes it; starts dusting.) Well, this table doesn't look as if it had been dusted under here for a week. What a dust! I wonder what girl it was that *dusted* under here yesterday. (Gets down side of piano to dust.) I am glad the girls share the work. It seems like home, helping this way. (Hums to herself.)

(Enter Bernice, Toodles, Florence, Esther, Ethel and Joyce, not seeing Magnolia.)

Bernice. Oh, girls, we're behind on our Tennyson—that is, I am.

Ethel. I'm just as far behind as you are.

Esther. And I guess you could beat me!

Bernice. You know Miss Langley expects us to recite part of "Elaine," Friday.

Toodles. Well, then, we better get on to our job.

Ethel. Toodles, you do use such disgusting English. (Toodles shrugs shoulders.)

Bernice. Say, Joyce, pass over the "Idylls of the King;" it's right on the table. (Joyce looks books over.)

Joyce. It's not here.

Florence. Well, then, let's see if we can do without it. I know I can, of course. (Girls exchange glances.)

Esther. Very well, then, Florence, we can learn from you.

Toodles. Pitch in, now, Miss Brag.

Florence. Bernice, you recite with me. You know it's that part where Elaine is dead, and they put her on a raft and send her down the river.

Bernice. I'll do the best I can.

Bernice and Florence (reciting).

"So those two brethren from the chariot took,
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, and kissed her quiet brow,
Saying, "Sister, farewell forever."
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Steered by the dumb, went upward with the flood."

(They both stop.)

Bernice. With the flood—with the flood—er—
(pause). Florence, now is your chance; you know it all (sarcastically).

Florence. Well, I—er—well, really I—(a pause).

Bernice (ignoring Florence). *Will* somebody go on?

Magnolia (stepping forward with duster. Girls jump in surprise. As she begins to recite they nudge one another and stare at her).

"In her right, the lily, in her left,
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold,
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as though she smiled."

(A pause.)

Bernice (stepping forward). Well, Mag, *where* did you learn Tennyson, and *what* are you doing here?

Magnolia. Oh, mother and I used to read together. She was very fond of Tennyson and so am I. I am glad you are studying "Idylls of the King."

Esther. But how did you happen to be in here?

Magnolia. Why, this is *my* morning to do the dusting! (Girls exchange glances.)

Ethel (loftily). Well, I don't have to work for *my* board. (Magnolia turns away.)

Toodles (aside). Oh, this is part of Hetty's little game, is it?

Joyce. Let's get out of the dust.

Ethel. We'll go into the garden and finish our lesson. (Magnolia resumes dusting.)

Toodles. Farewell, Lady Mag!

Bernice (to others as they go out). Well, girls, she isn't quite as green as we thought!

Ethel. She needn't come here trying to teach me. (Exit girls.)

Magnolia. The girls here treat me very strangely. And they call me "Mag." Nobody ever called me "Mag" before except that mean little scamp of a Tommy Sparks, and that when he was the most hateful. If the girls do this way, I shall hate them (showing anger). But I must not forget that mother said kindness begets kindness everywhere. I will try not to notice it.

(Enter Miss Green.)

Miss Green (stopping a moment and looking at *Magnolia*). Are you Miss Langley's maid?

Magnolia (starting and turning around). No; I'm one of Miss Langley's pupils (taking off her dust-cap).

Miss Green. Oh, then perhaps you can tell me who owns Johnson Hall?

Magnolia. It has been in the Langley family for three generations.

Miss Green. Do you know whether the school pays and whether it is free from debt?

Magnolia (hesitatingly). Well, I heard Miss Langley tell my mother about two years ago that she had lost money by bad investments, and had to mortgage the school. I remember she cried about it. (Pausing and looking startled.) Are you Miss Green? Perhaps I have told you something that should be kept secret.

Miss Green. It is perfectly safe with me, child. But I noticed, as I came in, that you were dusting. Do the girls help with the work?

Magnolia. Oh, yes, indeed, we take our turn dusting and doing the chamberwork.

Miss Green. Does the new girl from the country seem to enjoy the school?

Magnolia (stammeringly). Why—er—I—yes, I think she will. I'm the new girl, you know.

Miss Green. Oh! Well, I must not keep you from your work. Good morning, my dear. (Exit.)

Magnolia. I guess Miss Green is right. I was wasting time. (Resuming work.)

(Enter Miss Langley.)

Miss Langley (pausing and looking in great surprise at Magnolia). Magnolia! is it possible—

Magnolia. Oh, Miss Langley, is it so late? I have not meant to waste time, but Miss Green called and she talked to me. I will make up for lost time now. (Starts dusting hurriedly.)

Miss Langley. But why are you in here dusting?

Magnolia. Why, Miss Langley, don't you know? It's my morning to do this work!

Miss Langley. Your morning? What do you mean? Where is Hetty?

Magnolia. Hetty? Oh, she told me that the girls take turns dusting, and this happens to be my morning.

Miss Langley (gasps). Do you mean to tell me Hetty told you this about the dusting? (Starts to leave stage.) Well, I must see her about this immediately!

Magnolia (running after her). Why, Miss Langley, you aren't going to scold her? She was

very kind and helped me with all the chamber-work. Perhaps, though, I misunderstood her.

Miss Langley. I think you must have. (Exit.)

Magnolia (looking regretfully after her). Oh, dear, I wish I hadn't said anything, but I can't see why she was so surprised. (Putting cap and duster away.) There, that's done. (Exit *Magnolia*.)

(Enter *Bernice* and *Clarice*.)

Bernice. Now, *Clarice*, I'm going to appoint you my assistant in the great work which is now to be undertaken (grandly).

Clarice (saluting). At your service, madam—sir, I should say.

Bernice. Namely, to prepare for a spread in honor of the renowned Betty Maitland and Olive Arlington.

Clarice. Well, what are your plans for the campaign, general?

Bernice. Of course, it's going to be a spread, and I—(girls laugh outside). Oh, bother, here come the girls. I will tell you the full particulars later.

(Enter *Esther*, *Toodles*, *Ethel*, *Florence*, *Kitty* and *Joyce*.)

Joyce. Oh, *Bernice*, when is the spread to be?

Bernice. Why, let me see. To-morrow night, in my room.

All. What a lark!

Clarice (holding up hand). Ssh! Spies are ever on the lookout. Beware!

Ethel. What time do you propose to have it?

Bernice. Eleven o'clock, I guess. The lights are out at ten, and eleven all uninvited persons should be asleep. (Turning to Clarice.) Mind you listen at Miss Langley's door to see if all be well.

Clarice. If she's snoring I shall not need to listen. (Girls laugh. Pause.)

Bernice. Say, girls, it doesn't seem quite right not to invite Magnolia.

Ethel. What! that charity pupil! No, I guess not. If she comes, I'm—not—in it (turning away).

Toodles. I'll risk your fine feelings interfering with a spread.

Florence. Oh, well, you know she insists on going to bed at eight o'clock.

Bernice. Very well, then, only I don't feel quite right about it. By the way, girls, you must each come prepared to do a stunt.

Toodles (striking an attitude). "Give me liberty or give me death," or give me—prunes.

Florence. How will this do? (rolling her eyes and clutching wildly at the air.) Is it a dagger I see before me?

Ethel. Unhand me, villian, or by my troth, thou wilt rue this day.

Esther. My grandmother says that there is tragedy enough without affecting it.

Toodles. How will this do? (reciting with gesticulations, in a high-pitched voice.)

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are;
Up above the earth so high,
Like a diamond in the sky."

Joyce. Hear! hear!

(Enter Hetty.)

Bernice. What's the matter, Hetty? You look as if your last friend had deserted you.

Hetty (dejectedly). An' I guess she has, too. Miss Langley found out about my makin' the country girl do the dustin' this morning, an'—

Florence (indignantly). Did she tell on you? I wouldn't have done such a mean thing.

Bernice. No doubt Miss Langley found her dusting and she had to explain.

Ethel. So you take Magnolia's part, do you?

Bernice. Yes, I do.

Hetty. An' if the young ladies ain't a goin' back on me.

Toodles (tragically). You, too, Brutus.

Esther (going over to her). Never mind, Hetty, we'll stand by you. My grandmother says, "Never desert a friend in distress."

(Exit Hetty.)

Clarice. But what makes you take Mag's part, Bernice?

Bernice. Well, to tell the truth, I have no special reason, except that we are no better than she is. I was once Bernice Julien, not Bernice Julien, the daughter of the financier, Hiram P. Julien. In the first private school I attended I was treated very much as we are treating Mag-

nolia here. Oh, you needn't stare—I was. Each time I tried to make a friendly advance, it was, "Oh, it's you, is it?" (imitating.) And I can tell you I felt pretty sore and homesick. I have no doubt Magnolia feels the same way, but tries not to show it. That's why I take her part. So there!

Kitty (after a slight pause). Well, I don't know but what you *are* right.

Clarice. And I, for one, would like to know her better.

Joyce. So would I.

Ethel (loftily). Oh, no doubt she stands high in the society of Fairville, and is a very much sought-after belle.

Bernice. Well, Fairville would be good enough for me, and as for society—oh, some people come up from the ashcart business, you know. (Ethel looks uncomfortable.)

Esther. I heard my grandmother say she once heard a minister, who said, "Don't be ashamed of your business if it's honest, even if it's peddling soap grease!"

Toodles. Oh, come off with your soft soap!

Ethel. Magnolia may be respectable and all that, but I don't think she is in my class.

Joyce. No. She is in the class above you.

Bernice. Appearances are deceitful. Remember the Tennyson incident!

Toodles. I should say they are.

Florence. Oh, I'm never fooled by appearances. I guess not!

Kitty. Some people never are!

(Enter Hetty, ushering in Olive and Betty in street clothes.)

Hetty. Miss Bernice, here be some young ladies inquiren' for you.

Bernice. Visitors? At this time of day?

Olive (coming forward). Yes. Hullo, everybody!

All. Hullo! hullo!

Bernice (jumping up). Why, Olive Arlington, you here? And Betty? We didn't expect you were coming until to-morrow. Take off your things, girls. (Hetty takes them and exits.)

Olive. We received permission from Miss Langley to spend to-night instead of to-morrow night. (Girls look at one another with woe-begone faces.)

Kitty. But you can stay to-morrow night, too, can you not?

Olive. No; one night is all we are allowed. (Chorus of groans from girls.)

Esther. But our spread!

Betty. What spread?

Florence. You have let it all out now, Esther, we may as well tell.

Esther. My grandmother always said I couldn't keep a secret.

Bernice. Well, you see we had planned a grand spread in your honor for to-morrow night. Now all that seems spoiled, but—we must think of some way to keep you here.

Olive. Yes; it would be awful to miss that.

Betty. That's right, it would.

Joyce. Something must turn up in our favor.

(Enter Miss Langley and Miss Green.)

Miss Langley (pausing at doorway). Miss Green, these are my girls. This is my friend, Miss Matilda Green, young ladies. (Girls bow.)

Miss Green. I am very glad to meet the girls.

Miss Langley (to girls). Miss Green is to stay a while here, and would like to make herself one of us.

Miss Green. I have already met one of the pupils. She was dusting this room this morning. She is a very charming girl, and if she represents the character of the school, it is one of which to be proud. (Girls exchange glances.)

Bernice (aside). Another champion!

Miss Langley. Miss Green wishes to make a tour of the school before dinner time, so we must be moving. (Starts to go out, but turns back.) Oh, I meant to tell you that to-morrow I shall be away on business, and expect to remain over night.

(Exit Miss Langley and Miss Green.)

Toodles. Now, what do you know about that?

Bernice (jumping up). I *know* that it will give us a chance to have our spread after all.

All. Oh, goody! goody!

Olive. Just the very loophole we were looking for.

Bernice. Now Miss Langley will never know what an eventful night was spent during her absence.

Toodles. Hooray! Three cheers for the absence that makes the heart grow fonder.

All (in muffled voices). Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

Curtain rises, showing Bernice's room ready for the spread. Girls in pretty kimonos.

(For the stunts, introduce any Recitations, Readings, Monologs, Dialogs, Drills, and Musical numbers—these selections to be governed by the accomplishments of the participants.)

Bernice (surveying room). There, I guess everything is ready now. The girls ought to be here pretty soon, for it has now reached the witching hour of eleven (glancing at clock). My, those olives look good!

(Enter Esther, with candle, which she blows out at door.)

Esther. So I am the first arrival? My grandmother says it is always best to be a little ahead of time.

Bernice (sweetly). Oh, does she? (Aside.) I guess it's more likely she wants to be sure of the "eats!"

(Enter Betty and Olive, with Clarice and Joyce, with candles.)

Clarice. Well, I'm satisfied that no one has any inkling of what is going on. Miss Green

ought to be a very sound sleeper, at least, I hope she is for our sakes, and I don't think Hetty would give us away.

(Girls make themselves at home.)

Olive. You certainly have prepared a royal feast for us.

Joyce. Oh, I do wish the girls would come.

(Enter Ethel, Toodles, Florence, Kitty, with candles.)

Betty. Speaking of angels, they appear.

Toodles. Pretty near "angels of darkness." These lights out at ten make it bad for us.

Kitty. We were fortunate to have candles.

Bernice. No candles for me this night. The school will be out just so much more for gas, for what is a spread without light?

Ethel. Have you all got your stunts prepared?

Florence. Oh, I thought of mine the very first thing. I have practiced it so much that I am perfectly sure of it.

Toodles. So that was what ailed you last night, was it? You jabbered so in your sleep, I thought you were going to have a fit.

Olive. Poor thing! to have such a ferocious bedfellow!

Toodles. It is hard.

Bernice. I guess we can start in now. Is everyone here?

Joyce. Yup!

Betty. Now for the feast!

Kitty. Oh, isn't it just scrumptious! (Girls sit down preparatory to eating.)

Bernice (drawing Betty and Olive forward). These, friends, schoolmates, countrymen, are the guests of honor. To them will be allotted the seat nearest the macaroons and these choice imported olives.

(Girls start in to eat schoolgirl spread fashion.)

Ethel. I'm so glad Miss Langley was called away. Wasn't it fortunate for us?

All. Yes, wasn't it?

Bernice. Perhaps we had better start in with the stunts now, and get them over with in case we are interrupted. Kitty, you give yours first.

(Kitty gives stunt. Applause.)

Joyce. Just pass over those jelly sandwiches.

Bernice. Well, Toodles, are you ready with your stunt?

Toodles. "You would scarce expect one of my age, to appear in public on the stage."

Betty. Hear! hear!

Olive. We have a poetess in our midst!

Toodles (rising). No, not every one can be a poet, any more than any sheep can be a go-at!

Ethel. Horrors! Again?

Florence. Please spare us!

(Toodles gives stunt. Applause.)

(A loud knock is heard at the door. All stop in petrified amazement.)

Bernice. Good gracious, it's Miss Langley! Quick, girls, hide! (Wild confusion. Girls scatter behind table, chairs, etc., etc. Another knock. Bernice goes to door and unlocks it.)

(Enter Miss Green, with candle.)

Bernice. Why, good evening, Miss Green. (Turning to girls, in stage whisper.) It's only Miss Green, girls.

Miss Green (affably, with some sarcasm). I hope I am not very late. I have never had a chance to attend a girls' midnight party before, so I appreciate all the more your thoughtfulness in inviting me. (Settles herself comfortably in chair, as girls gradually emerge from hiding places.)

Bernice (to Clarice). Of all queer things! Who invited her?

Clarice. I certainly didn't. (Both laugh.) She must have overheard our plans.

Bernice. It's all up with us now!

Miss Green (looking around). This seems to be a kimono party. If I had known—but there, I haven't one with me anyway. (Pausing and eying the girls closely.) How often do you have these kimono parties?

Esther. We call them "spreads."

Ethel. We are giving this in honor of two of our friends. Miss Langley lets us have them when we have been very good. (Girls gasp.)

Clarice. We find it convenient, however, to have them while she is away, for we know then that the noise will not disturb her.

Bernice (to Betty and Olive). I suppose we would better ask her to stay. Evidently she intends to do so. We'll be in for it when Miss Langley gets home to-morrow, though!

Olive. Try and be as nice to her as possible, and maybe she won't tell!

Bernice (turning to Miss Green, who has been talking with some of the girls). We would like to have you stay with us, Miss Green.

Miss Green (aside). This will be a good place to learn something of the girls' ways. Thank you, my dear, I should like to.

Ethel. We have a little entertainment always. Perhaps you can contribute something toward it?

Miss Green. If I had known I was to be present at a midnight—what do you call it?

Joyce. A midnight "spread."

Miss Green. Oh, yes. If I had known I was to be present at a midnight "*spread*," I certainly should have tried to prepare something to add to the enjoyment. As it is, I am unprepared. (Girls pass food to her.) There are some remaining numbers on the program, I hope.

Toodles. Yes; Florence was just going to give her stunt when you came in.

Bernice (aside to Florence). Go ahead, Florence; she's one of us, you know.

(Florence gives stunt. Applause.)

Miss Green. My dear, you have the art of making us laugh!

Florence. Thank you.

Bernice. The next number on the program will be a comb solo by the world-renowned Professor St. Clair Longa de Winda, of the Jonsohn Orchestra!

(Clarice gives stunt with several stops for wind. Applause.)

Miss Green. You are indeed a virtuoso!

Olive. We ought to have a bicycle pump to keep you supplied with wind.

Ethel. Can't you give us "Silver Threads Among the Gold?"

Clarice. No; that's not in my repertoire as a solo.

Joyce. Say, girls, give three reasons why a man is like a kerosene lamp.

Esther (after a short pause). Because he lights up once in a while.

Joyce. Way off!

Betty. Because he frequently needs refilling?

Joyce. That might make the fourth one, but it's not one of the three that I am thinking of.

Bernice. I give it up!

Olive. So do I.

Florence. And I!

Joyce. First, because he often goes out at night; second, because he smokes a great deal; and last, because he is easily turned down.

Ethel. Good enough.

Miss Green. Well, I have never given much thought to the whys and wherefores of men, so I've never tried to think why a man is like a lamb. (Girls smile suggestively.)

Bernice. Come Esther and Betty and your colleagues, are you ready for your stunt?

Betty (aside). Oh, my, do we come next? (Esther groans.)

Ethel. Go ahead, you four!

(*Esther, Betty, Kitty and Joyce give stunt. Applause.*)

Miss Green. You did very well, my dears.

Joyce. Thank you! (Others smile.)

Miss Green. You have quite a roomful, Miss Hostess. Are all the girls here?

Bernice. Yes—I—that is—

Kitty. All but Magnolia.

Miss Green. She is the new girl, is she not?

Clarice. Yes. She is not quite used to our ways yet, and she—

Joyce. Insists on going to bed at eight o'clock.

Miss Green. Now, do you know, I think she is a very sensible girl. (Girls exchange glances.)

Esther. Well, now, that is what my grandmother would say.

Florence. The next stunt is in order now. Bernice, I should think it was about your turn. (*Ethel and Olive go to back of room behind screen.*)

Bernice (rising). I depended on you girls to furnish the entertainment, but if I must—. Here goes. (*Bernice gives stunt. Applause.*)

Betty. That's great!

Miss Green. You certainly missed your calling, my dear! You should have gone on the vaudeville stage.

Bernice (smiling). I am thinking of it. (After a slight pause.) There is still one more stunt that we haven't had. *Ethel and Olive are going*

to give theirs now. (They come forward and give stunt. Applause.)

Miss Green. That was very pretty my dears, yes, very pretty.

Bernice (to Miss Green). Miss Green, this is the last of the stunts. Now we are going to have a closing selection by the famous Jonsohn Orchestra. If you had remained in bed, we wouldn't have dared do this. As it is, this will beat all the noises you have heard yet. (They laugh.) Come on, girls! (She pulls out from under couch, horns, combs, harmonicas, tin pans, etc., etc., and hands them to the girls.) We will play to-night, at Miss Fenleigh's request, "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

(The girls "play." Bernice conducts, beating time with a baton, or plays violin or other instrument, sustaining the melody. Piano, light accompaniment. Miss Green covers her ears with her hands. Piano continues to play as curtain goes down.)

CURTAIN.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—School sitting room just after commencement exercises. Graduates distinguished from others by white dresses.

(Enter Magnolia, Kitty, Joyce and Clarice.)

Magnolia. This is the first Commencement I've ever attended.

Clarice. I am to graduate next year.

Joyce. Didn't our girls carry off the honors well?

Magnolia. Ethel must be very bright to win the scholarship.

Clarice. Toodles would have carried off the prize for "English as it is spoke" all right if there had been one.

Kitty. Toodles is not nearly so slangy as she used to be. I think she has improved.

(Enter Bernice, Ethel, Florence, Toodles, Esther, with diplomas.)

Toodles. I tell you, this does give one a down-in-the-mouth feeling. Still, there is some satisfaction in knowing that we do look "classy."

Magnolia (aside). Not so much improvement after all.

Bernice. This is the last of the dear old "Golden Rule" days.

Ethel. Oh, talk about something more cheerful.

Florence. Well, we certainly have the pleasure of looking back over many good times.

Joyce. The spread, for instance.

Esther. Do you know my conscience has troubled me about that spread?

Toodles. Been hearing from your grandmother lately, haven't you, Esther?

Esther. I wouldn't need to.

Ethel. Well, I must say I have felt it was beneath my principles to lend myself to anything

in the way of deception, even if I did have a good time out of it.

Toodles. Oh, cut it out!

Kitty. Miss Langley has been so good to us, it doesn't seem right to break rules even for a good time.

Bernice. Well, girls, I felt just as you do, and felt so strongly that I took it upon myself to tell Miss Langley all about it. (Girls look astonished.)

Clarice. You told her?

All. What did she say?

Bernice. She didn't say very much, but I am glad I told her. Miss Langley believes "an open confession is good for the soul," and I am sure includes us all in her forgiveness. (Girls nod approval.) Miss Langley is evidently in serious trouble. I only hope it will come out all right.

Ethel. I am very glad you told her. (Slight pause.)

Clarice. To change the subject, you must feel pretty sore, Bernice, over losing the scholarship.

Bernice. I don't see why you should all think that I should win. We have all worked for it, and I am sure Ethel wins fairly. (Going to Ethel.) Ethel, I congratulate you. (Shaking hands.)

Ethel. Thank you, Bernice! Next to winning myself, I should like to have had you win.

Bernice. Trying has been good for me. Perhaps being beaten is good for me, too. By the

way, what are your plans for the summer, girls? Mother and I are going to join dad in London and go through Great Britain in our touring car.

Kitty. I'm going to the Yellowstone Park for a while. Just think of it!

Esther. We's going to my grandmother's farm this year.

Toodles. Your grandmother should have had a diploma, too, for she has been so much a part of us. I'm free to confess I hope she has graduated from my society for all time.

Joyce. Give my best regards to your grandmother when you see her. (Girls draw off to one side, talking, leaving Bernice and Magnolia on couch.)

Bernice. What are you planning to do this summer, Magnolia?

Magnolia (disconsolately). I don't know. I haven't heard from father for a long time. You know he went out West. I am beginning to worry about him. If I don't hear soon, I will have to find something to do during this summer, for I should be sorry to burden Miss Langley.

Bernice. We must hope for the best.

(Enter Miss Green.)

Miss Green (to Ethel). My dear, I wish to congratulate you on winning the scholarship. It is indeed an honor.

Ethel. Thank you.

Miss Green (to girls). In this time I have stayed with you, I have found out the good times school-girls have are not all in books. Just here

let me say Miss Langley does not know of your little kimono party.

Bernice. But she *does* know, Miss Green. We have told her all about it.

Miss Green. As that was the first and last I shall probably ever attend, I did not wish to spoil it by getting you into trouble. I think you did quite right to tell her. Girls, I have something nice to tell *you* (feeling in her pocket). Why, I thought I had the letter with me. I must have left it in my room. (Exit.)

(Enter Miss Langley slowly.)

Miss Langley (seating herself). Dear girls, I hate to mar your happy day, but there is something of importance I wish to tell you. There is a very heavy mortgage on Johnson Hall. The time expires to-morrow. So Johnson Hall will have to be closed and sold. It has been in the family for more than three generations. Oh, it seems more than I can bear (burying her face in her hands).

Bernice (going up to her). Oh, Miss Langley, I am so very, very sorry!

Ethel. Can't something be done?

Kitty. And I can't have any Commencement!

Clarice. Oh, don't think of such things now, Kitty.

(Enter Hetty, excitedly, with telegram.)

Hetty. Miss Green—girls—Miss Langley—oh, ma'am, it's a telegraphum!

Miss Langley. Bernice, you read; I—I can't!

(Bernice opens and reads.)

(Enter Miss Green. She stops in surprise.)

"To Miss Elizabeth Langley,

"Johnson Hall, N. Y.:

"Johnson Hall endowed by me. Amount, \$50,000.
Receive check to-morrow. Miss Green will explain.
Love to my daughter Magnolia.

"JAMES T. SIMPSON."

(Miss Langley looks dazed. Girls gasp in astonishment.)

Ethel (grabbing girl nearest her). A charity pupil, eh!

Florence (aside). I knew as much!

Miss Green (coming forward with self-satisfied air, unfolding a letter). I was about to tell the good news I received yesterday to you all, but thought I would wait until the excitement of the exercises was over.

Miss Langley. Oh, it can't—it can't be true. (She falls back, while girls run for smelling salts. Toodles fans her vigorously.)

Miss Green. Good news never kills. (Miss Green proceeds as Miss Langley sits up.) Possibly you girls have wondered why I am here. Miss Langley has supposed me a boarding school inspector. Now, I am going to tell you the purpose of my stay. Years ago James Simpson and I went to school together in the little red schoolhouse in Fairville. (Magnolia starts.) Later on I moved to Mexico, where I grew up. What was my surprise to meet there a man whom I discovered was the same Jim Simpson that I knew in the red schoolhouse days. He was rapidly

acquiring a large fortune, and upon learning of his wife's death, and Magnolia's whereabouts, he wished, out of gratitude to you, Miss Langley, to endow the school.

Magnolia (starting forward). Oh, Miss Green! My father!

Miss Green. Yes, my dear! (Draws Magnolia to her.) He sent me here in the guise of a boarding school inspector, in order that I might make my inquiries to the best advantage. That was my mission here. You see the result. This letter in substance is the same as the telegram.

Kitty. And I can have my Commencement after all.

Miss Langley (rising and coming forward). Yes, Kitty, you shall have your Commencement, and I my old home, thanks to Mr. Simpson and Miss Green and this dear child (drawing Magnolia to her).

(Bell rings; exit Hetty.)

Miss Langley (turning to Miss Green). I can simply say, "I thank you."

(Enter Hetty.)

Hetty. Here's a specially delivered letter for you, ma'am! (*Miss Langley* reads letter silently.)

Bernice. Hasn't this been an eventful Commencement Day?

Ethel. I fully confess to being won over to your side, Bernice (turning to Magnolia). Forgive me, Magnolia, for all I have said. Let's be friends (holding out her hand).

Magnolia. Gladly!

Miss Langley (rising). It is a letter from Mr. Simpson inviting, me with Magnolia and Miss Green, to visit him this summer in Mexico.

Bernice (stepping over to Magnolia). You see, girls, appearances *are* deceitful. She whom we were pleased to call "the charity pupil" has saved Johnson Hall. Now let's give three rousing cheers for Johnson Hall! (Girls cheer.)

CURTAIN.



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